

WINTER 2024

Alumni Columns

Northwestern State University Magazine





Dr. Marcus Jones (1992)
President
Northwestern State University

Dear alumni,

Two exciting events occurred on campus as the fall semester came to a close: the hiring of Blaine McCorkle as NSU's head football coach and the groundbreaking for the David and Sherry Morgan Health Performance Center. These milestones were celebrated as positive steps towards a better future for NSU.

A few weeks ago, the NSU family celebrated Homecoming, an event that drew students and alumni together. The format was a bit different, but the celebration was just as special for families and guests, the Honor Court, spirit groups and faculty and staff volunteers who worked very hard to present an enjoyable event.

During the Long Purple Line induction program, Louie Bernard, an honoree, made some profound statements. He said, "There is not a college, there is not a business, there is not a family that has not known adversity." When bad things happen, hard decisions - often unpopular decisions -- must be made. They are not made lightly or without consideration for the impact they might have both on and off campus.

Moving forward, NSU will continue to focus on the well-being of our students, providing the best possible student experience and preparing career-ready graduates.

I thank you for all that you have done and all that you continue to do to support the alma mater that we love.

Best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2024.



Danielle Antoon Cobb (2010)
Director
Alumni Affairs

Dear alumni,

As I stood on the stage at the Long Purple Line induction and spoke on behalf of my family, I could feel that my dad was present and know he felt the love of friends who shared stories and memories about him. It was a beautiful moment for our family and we were honored to be included along with the other inductees for such a special recognition. It is always inspiring to hear about the lasting impact that NSU has had on our lives, our family and our community.

I would be remiss if I tried to name all the individuals who contributed to making Homecoming 2023 special. There are just too many to name. It makes me so proud to be an NSU Demon.

As I write this, we are winding down the semester and already beginning to plan activities and events for Spring 2024. Mark your calendars for Flavor of Louisiana to take place on March 15.

From all of us at the Northwestern State University Foundation and Alumni Association, I wish you all a warm and joyful holiday season and all the best for you in the new year.

Read the Columns online by scanning this QR code.



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FAX: 318-357-4225 • E-mail: cobbd@nsula.edu

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Dallas, 1986, 2016
1st Vice President.....Dr. Nikki Ceaser-Small,
Arlington, Texas, 2007
2nd Vice President..... J. Scott Repp, McKinney, Texas, 1989
Secretary Dr. Lisa Landry Mathews, Shreveport, 1992
Treasurer.....Kimberly Martin, Houston, 1988
Past President.....Patricia Hrapmann, New Orleans, 1973, 1978

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NSU President..... Dr. Marcus Jones, 1992
Vice President
for External Affairs.....Dr. William Drake Owens, 2004, 2005

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steven Celestine..... Shreveport, 1989
Tommy Chester Natchitoches, 1969
Caron Chester Coleman Natchitoches, 2000
Shade Dufrene.....Savannah, Texas, 1999, 2003
Allen Evans..... Shreveport, 1989
John Evans..... Natchitoches, 1992
LaTasha Gray-Grant.....Mansfield, Texas, 2007
Emilyn Horton.....Natchitoches, 1987, 1993, 2001
Emilie King..... Shreveport, 2017
Matt Koury..... Leesville, 1995
Jeremy LaCombe.....New Roads, 1999
Lane Luckie Tyler, Texas, 2008
Virginia Monceret.....New Roads, 2001
Mandi Mueller New Orleans, 2009
Camille Nunez Slidell, 2001
Michael Prudhomme Natchez, 1984
Joe Robertson.....DeQuincy, 1990
Mark Spikes..... League City, Texas, 1991
Joseph B. Stamey..... Natchitoches, 1983
Crystal Hemphill Stewart..... Natchitoches, 1997, 2003
Toni Stroud..... Natchitoches, 1989
Glenn Talbert..... Shreveport, 1964
Jim Villard Alexandria, 1983

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

Jerry Brungart..... Natchitoches, 1969, 1971
Leonard Endris (deceased)..... Leesville, 1974
Dr. Hayward Hargrove..... Black Mountain, N.C., 1964
Gail Metoyer Jones Natchez 1981, 1998

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

SGA PresidentBailey Willis, Opelousas

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Publisher.....Danielle Antoon Cobb, 2010
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Contributors.....David West
Jason Pugh
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Amy Lee, 2019
Cree Roark Gentry, 2022
Design/Layout.....Daphne Hines, 1982, 1984

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NSU gets Title III grant to assist low-income students

Northwestern State University has been awarded a Title III "Elevate U" grant in the amount of \$2,072,425 to support initiatives aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates for low-income students.

"Essentially, the grant will help students make purposeful choices in selecting a field of study, determine the most appropriate academic path and ensure they are career-ready upon graduation," said NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones.

Title III grants are awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to help eligible institutions expand their capacity to serve low-income students. The grant will enable NSU to improve academic advising and address postsecondary education access, affordability and post-enrollment success at NSU, where many first-time freshmen are classified as low-income.

According to data, average academic performance for low-income students is lower than those of students who are not low-income and lower gateway course success rates and lower GPAs may contribute to students needing more time to graduate. Low-income students have significantly lower four-year graduation rates compared to rates for students who are not low-income.

According to Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Greg. Handel, NSU will implement a two-pronged five-year

plan to meet the needs of low-income students, which includes first-generation students who are the first in their families to attend college.

"Our first priority is to improve academic advising and support," Handel said. "Strategies will include academic advising, guided pathways to degree completion and a more integrated advising, tutoring and career planning experience. First generation students will be a major component of this grant's impact."

Handel said NSU has a user-friendly hands-on approach with academic advising already in place and the grant will provide extra layers of support.

"Students have academic advisors in their majors who guide them through course selection and registration each semester and assist them in networking with future internship placements," he said. "This grant will assist first generation and low-income students with tutoring and career-placement and strategies for success that are specifically driven by what these students need to succeed. The grant will enable students will grow academically, be involved socially and professionally across campus organizations and activities and learn strategies that lead to employment after graduation."

The second component is to expand the first-year and second-year experience

at NSU by implementing residential living learning communities to engage low-income students, build community and promote a sense of belonging.

"Living Learning Communities incorporate academic, leadership and career programs that include tutoring, peer mentor support, financial guidance, health and wellness, community building and proactive academic advising," said Vice President for the Student Experience and Dean of Students Reatha Cox.

"Resident mentors work within the residential communities to promote personal development, citizenship, campus involvement and familiarity with resources that available to help students."

Administrators will track data, assess outcomes and provide state and federal reports to inform decision making and guide adjustments over the five-year program and beyond.

"Data shows that when students get involved, whether through academic organizations, service organizations or social organizations, the likelihood that they will graduate increases. We plan to implement programs where low-income students have opportunities to understand that they belong here, help them stay focused on their goals and develop not only academically, but as leaders on campus and in their communities," Jones said.

On the cover: Jillian Duggan, a dance major from Shreveport, performed in the popular annual NSU Christmas Gala. Students and faculty in the School of Creative and Performing Arts presented nine Gala performances over three days, including daytime shows for hundreds of school children from throughout the region and sold-out evening performances for the general public.

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A panel of students, staff and alumni who were the first in their families to attend college discussed their experiences as first-generation college students during NSU's First Generation College Student Celebration Nov. 7. Mediator was guest Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education. From left are LeAndre Benton, Roni Biscoe, Misty Dalme, Peyton Fuller, Coree Nash, Dr. Mary Blanchard Wallace and Reed.

First Gen Week celebrates and supports first-generation students

Financial concerns, navigating the academic system, knowing what questions to ask and how to ask them are just a few challenges that first generation college students often face. Those experiences, as well as perseverance, the importance of mentors and where to find support were among the topics shared as Northwestern State University celebrated First Gen Week in November, part of a nation-wide acknowledgement of students who are the first in their families to attend college. At NSU, that's about 34 percent of students.



Peyton Fuller

In addition to collecting personal stories from faculty and staff, a highlight of the week was a luncheon and panel discussion in which current students, staff and alumni discussed common struggles, the importance of community and steps they took to be career ready by graduation.

Peyton Fuller of Buckeye, a sophomore majoring in biology with a concentration in veterinary technology, said being a first-generation student means exceeding expectations and making a lot out of a little.

"I took on a lot of responsibility at a young age to get myself where I am now," she said. "I always knew that my goal was to attend college, and then veterinary school. I knew that college was the most logical solution to make more for myself."

Coree Nash of Jena is a junior social work major and the oldest of nine children. His motivation is in setting an example for his younger siblings.

"I think about starting my own legacy," he said.

Alumni panelists were alumni LeAndre Benton (2015), assistant principal at J. J. Pearce High School in Richardson (Texas) ISD.; Misty Dalme (2014, 2017) of Natchitoches, a family nurse practitioner in the Emergency Department at Natchitoches Regional Medical Center and director of Emergency Services, and Dr. Mary Blanchard Wallace (1992, 1994), assistant vice president of Student Experience at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Veronica Biscoe, NSU's executive director of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources, was a staff representative.

Wallace was also keynote speaker discussing "A Story for Every Student," including her personal journey as a first-generation

First Gen alumna Howell shares story of perseverance

Carla Howell, NSU's director of Purchasing and Sponsored Programs, shared her First Gen story in the hopes it will give others the courage to pursue a degree.

Howell's motivation came from wanting to make her father proud. Despite his lack of formal education, he operated a successful small business for over 40 years while supporting his children's sports and activities.

In high school, Howell participated in Distributive Education Club of America (DECA), a program in which students attended school in the morning and worked in the afternoon to earn high school credits through their job. She was elected state DECA president her senior year and traveled to Louisiana high schools to promote the program.

She received a DECA scholarship to attend NSU in the fall of 1984, initially pursuing a degree in distributive education.

Howell married soon after high school graduation, first taking on a 30-hour work week while a full-time student and later working full-time as a part-time student. She also switched her major to accounting and business administration.

In January 1991, she joined the staff in NSU's Student Accounting office, under Business Affairs. After going through a divorce, she earned associate degrees in accounting and business administration, took a year off school and returned determined to finish her four-year degree.

"I continued to work full-time taking evening and weekend classes. Occasionally, my only option would be

to take a day course around my lunch break and I was required to make up each hour I attended for class during my scheduled work time. The challenges were sometimes tough, and I was fortunate to work in an environment that supported my education while also letting me pursue a career."

By the spring of 1996, Howell had remarried and was expecting her first child. She needed two classes to graduate, but feeling overwhelmed with work, school and a new baby, she completed a drop/resignation form.

Her dean, Dr. Barry Smiley, refused to sign it.

"He said very plainly, 'No, Carla. You have worked too hard for too long and are too close to stop now. I will not let you do this.'"

After discussing her situation with her professor, she decided to continue with her last two classes and graduated that May.

Over the years, Howell has continued to advance in her career at NSU, having served in numerous administrative roles. In 2011, she became a Certified Research Administrator and is completing her second year as the appointed Research and Grant Writing Content Expert for the University of Louisiana System, a position that has allowed her to share her knowledge and experience with faculty and staff at all nine schools in the system.

Howell continues to encourage students to continue their education, even



Carla Howell

if it's just one course per semester.

"My story just tells of a young girl who held on to life by its tail, stepped out of her comfort zone, stayed focused on her goal and refused to give up. I am blessed to be in a position to share my story and look back at how it was all worth it."



First Gen continued...

student from Brusly to her current role as an assistant vice president at UAB where she is an advocate for first-generation students. Earlier in the day, Wallace was guest speaker at a workshop for Student Affairs professionals titled "First-Generation Faculty and Staff as Influencers." She said first generation students may suffer from imposter syndrome and encouraged staff to question assumptions they might make about first generation students.

As part of First Gen Week, NSU's TRIO Student Support Services collected first gen stories in a campaign titled "I'm First and Here's Why I'm Worth It" to highlight the accomplishments of NSU staff who are the first in their families to navigate the college experience. Read about NSU alum Carla Howell above.



Coree Nash

Gift creates first generation scholarships in memory of Brittain, Pierce, Ware

Three pillars of the Northwestern State University family were honored and memorialized Nov. 18 when the NSU Foundation announced the creation of the Jack Brittain Jr., Jerry Pierce and Richard Ware First Generation Endowed Scholarships, made possible by a \$300,000 donation from Robert "Skeeter" Salim.

NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones and Edgar Cano-Lopez, assistant professor of art, unveiled a portrait of Brittain, Pierce and Ware depicting the three individuals with the NSU columns in the background, symbolic of their legacies at the university.

Salim, a Northwestern State tennis letterman from 1968-72 is a successful attorney with offices in Natchitoches and Houston. His support of Demon baseball has been pivotal for over two decades, resulting in significant facility enhancements and more.

"These guys were always together. The three of them were just so intertwined and their love for Northwestern was incredible. You couldn't have a conversation with any one of the three of them when Northwestern didn't come up in the conversation," Salim said. "I had a special relationship with all three of them."

Brittain, a Natchitoches native and four-year (1974-78) Demon football letterman and 2013 N-Club Hall of Fame Distinguished Service Award honoree, was a passionate supporter of Natchitoches, Northwestern State and Demon Athletics.

"Britt," as he was known, passed away July 11, 2023, after a brief illness.

Pierce served over 57 years on staff at NSU and was vice president of External Affairs from 1990 until his death last November. Pierce's impact at the university, in the community and around the state was profound, not only as an administrator, but as a writer, humorist, ambassador, fund raiser and mentor to personnel at all levels of administration, including nine NSU presidents.

As district judge, Ware presided over the 39th Judicial District, which encompasses all of Red River Parish. As a hard-running fullback at NSU from 1967-70, he won all Gulf States Conference recognition and was the league's Most Valuable Back as a senior. He led the Demons in rushing



Program host Doug Ireland asked friends to give a thumbs up to conclude the Nov 18 program and relayed the following anecdote. "Richard was killed in an auto accident on Aug. 31, 1996, a week before our season-opening game against Southern. On Sept. 7, 16,222 fans provided an overflow crowd at Turpin Stadium. When the team captains met at midfield for the coin toss before kickoff, a short tribute to Richard was read over the PA system, and it ended by citing his warmth and positivity, and asked the crowd and teams to honor his memory by turning to the NSU radio booth in the press box and giving Richard's trademark 'thumbs up' gesture."

in 1969 and 1970. His 1,735 career yards rushing ranks 10th all time in school history. He also played tennis for Coach Johnnie Emmons and was named to the Top 100 Demons of the Century roster, chosen for the 2007 football centennial celebration.

Ware was an avid supporter of Northwestern's athletic and alumni activities and served as an adjunct faculty member while practicing law in Natchitoches before becoming district judge. Ware was the color analyst for radio broadcasts of Demon football games for 17 years.

He was killed in a car accident Aug. 31, 1996.

An application for \$60,000 in matching funds has been submitted to the Louisiana Board of Regents to bring the total endowment corpus to \$360,000. The permanent scholarship endowment will assist first generation college students at Northwestern State University who are the

first in their family to attend college.

To make a contribution to the scholarship fund, contact Cristy Bernard at (318) 357-4292 or visit www.northwesternstatealumni.com/BPWFG to make an online contribution.



A painting of the late Jack Brittain Jr., Jerry Pierce and Richard Ware was unveiled Nov. 18 during a program to announce three first-generation scholarships established in their memory at Northwestern State University through a donation from Natchitoches attorney Skeeter Salim. Assistant Professor of Art Edgar Cano-Lopez is the artist. The painting symbolizes the lasting legacies of Brittain, Pierce and Ware at the university.

NSU invites alumni to join DemoNSUnite platform

Northwestern State University's Office of Alumni Affairs has created a community networking platform exclusively for NSU alumni. The DemoNSUnite platform is another way that alumni can explore and network with NSU entrepreneurs, connect mentors with mentees, post or find jobs and stay current on NSU news and events.

The capabilities of the platform include a News feed from the main NSU page to keep users informed of happenings at NSU, Events feed to stay informed of upcoming events and ticketing information for NSU events and a Live feed that will circulate content from the platform. The platform also includes a Forums section where topics to engage alumni will be posted, an Opportunities section where individuals can post job listings and mentorship opportunities and a People Directory, where users can navigate and locate other users within the platform.

"The goal of DemoNSUnite is to provide a networking platform for NSU alumni to engage with each other and rekindle

friendships," said Danielle Antoon Cobb, director of Alumni Affairs. "This platform serves as a virtual community where alumni can interact and support each other personally and professionally. As undergraduates, NSU provided us with the education and skills needed to excel in our careers. This platform allows us to network amongst professionals in

our fields and beyond. We hope this platform will unite alumni and enable individuals seeking new opportunities to find them. The

features of this community will keep alumni up to date with the happenings on campus and opportunities provided by fellow alumni worldwide. In addition, alumni will be able to connect with fellow alumni who graduated within the same decade."

Individuals can request to join the platform by visiting nsudemonsunite.com/signup or following the QR code above.

For more information, contact Cobb at cobbd@nsula.edu or (318) 357-5513.



DemoNSUnite

Aymond inducted into Texas High School Coaches Assoc. Hall of Honor

David P. Aymond (1969) was inducted into the Texas High School Coaches Association's 2023 Hall of Honor, which recognizes individuals for significant contributions to the coaching profession. Aymond recently retired after 46 years of high school coaching, most recently at North Shore High School in Houston, where he took over a struggling program in 1994 and built it into a powerhouse that consistently churns out wins and Division I players.

As a child, Aymond was adopted by hard-working illiterate sharecroppers who worked a farm in the Opelousas area. At age 14 he was appointed director of Opelousas' thriving youth league baseball organization, where he learned to be assertive and promote positive morale. At NSU, he learned the importance of detail-oriented instruction from Coach Alvin "Cracker" Brown and mental toughness from Dr. Buddy Bonnette, head of the

Department of Health and Physical Education.

"I also learned the 'singleness of purpose' from the writings of Vince Lombardi and the specificity in goal setting, foundation building and inspiring through enthusiastic instruction from

John Wooden," he said.

Aymond began coaching football and baseball in Louisiana in 1969, the first 15 years of his career at Opelousas, Bolton, Bel Air and Abbeville, his first head coaching job, where he turned the Wildcat program into a winner. He then moved to Texas

where he was an assistant at Langham Creek Kemper and Aldine Nimitz high schools in Houston before assuming head coaching duties at Nimitz in 1990. They reached the playoffs three years later. After that season, at age 49, he became the head coach at Houston North Shore, taking over a program that hadn't seen a winning season in 31 years.

Starting with his first year, Aymond led North Shore to the Texas high school playoffs for 20 consecutive seasons. During that stretch, the Mustangs won or shared 13 district championships. During his tenure they won 206 games and lost 42. Aymond was selected district Coach of the year 10 times. During the 20-season span, North Shore recorded 10 perfect regular seasons with eight occurring consecutively between 2001-2008. By the end of district play in 2008, the team had set a Texas high school record for consecutive regular season wins at 78, which included 58 consecutive victories within district play.

North Shore won the Texas 5A Division I State Championship in 2003 and finished the season with a record of 15-0. They were also state semi-finalists in 1996 and 2007. He also coached 187 players who signed college scholarships.

Aymond's overall record as a head football coach in Texas is 228 wins to 61 losses.

Aymond has been honored with many awards. He was named Coach of the Year in 1996 and 2003 by the Touchdown Club of Houston and also named Coach of the year in 2003. He was twice selected as a coach in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl and was inducted into the Greater Houston Football Coaches Association Hall of Honor in 2008.



Spotlights

Dr. Connie Ledoux Book was one of four individuals inducted into the Manship School Hall of Fame at Louisiana State University. Induction recognizes the accomplishments of distinguished mass communication professionals.

Book is a passionate advocate for higher education and its power to transform students' lives. She spent 16 years as an



Book

Elon University (North Carolina) faculty member and administrative leader, helping to build the university's reputation for excellence in engaged teaching and learning. In 2015, she

accepted a groundbreaking role as the first female provost and chief academic officer at The Citadel. Following her accomplishments there, she returned to Elon as president in 2018, bringing a deep appreciation for the university's unique history and its rapid rise to national prominence.

Under Book's leadership, Elon launched the 10-year Boldly Elon strategic plan to advance the university's national leadership in experiential education, mentoring and student success.

In spring 2023, Book announced the successful completion of the Elon LEADS comprehensive campaign, the largest effort in the university's history, raising more than \$260 million in support of Elon's distinctive mission.

Shannon Beadle has been promoted to executive vice president and director



Beadle

of human resources at Texas Bank and Trust. She has been in the bank's human resources division since 2010. She is a graduate of the

bank's 2012 Leadership Class and 2017 Corporate University, as well as the Independent Bankers Association of Texas' Bank Operations Institute. A Louisiana native, Beadle earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at NSU in 2013 and completed the Human Resource Management School through the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She holds a PHR certification through the HR Certification Institute and a SHRM-CP certification through the Society for Human Resource Management. Beadle serves on the Texas Shakespeare Festival Foundation board and is a sustaining member of the Junior League of Longview.

The Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) announced that **Ken Hale**, president and CEO of BOM Bank,



Hale

Natchitoches, was reelected to the ICBA Federal Delegate Board. ICBA is the nation's voice for community banks.

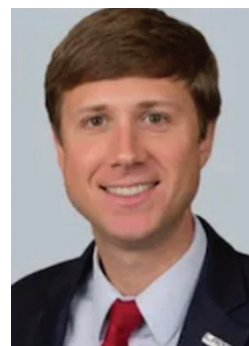
Hale earned a degree in business administration at Northwestern State University

in 1994 and has served as a long-time member of the NSU Foundation Board.

In addition to helping shape and advocate ICBA's national policy positions and programs, Hale's duties include engaging in grassroots activities in Louisiana and serving as a liaison between independent community bankers and ICBA staff and leadership in Washington, D.C. He will also work to recruit new members to ICBA.

Hale's wife, Shannon Wall-Hale, earned a degree in Student Personnel Services at NSU in 1995 and is currently on faculty as an instructor in the Department of Psychology.

Will Green is the incoming president and CEO of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, the largest business



Green

advocacy group in the state. He is the outgoing president of the Louisiana Automobile Dealers Association, where he served for nearly eight years. LADA is the trade association

for the roughly 350 new motor vehicle car and heavy truck dealers in Louisiana. Before that, he was the director of civil justice reform and employee relations at LABI. He also spent time in several roles at the Louisiana Workforce Commission. He earned his law degree from the Mississippi College School of Law and his B.A. in political science from Northwestern in 2005.

STEM education research by **Dr. Leslie A. Birdon** (1994) won the Rayma Harchar Outstanding Research Paper Award



Birdon

this past fall, presented by the Louisiana Education Research Association to recognize excellence in educational research associated with methodology. Her topic,

"Teacher Perceptions on Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning Approaches to Underrepresented STEM populations," was included in Research Issues in Contemporary Education, Vol. 8 No. 1 (2023). A native of Monroe, Birdon earned an undergraduate degree in microbiology with a minor in chemistry at NSU in 1994 and a Master of Education in environmental geosciences at the University of Texas in 2001. She further earned +30 in curriculum and instruction for teaching gifted and talented, literacy and biology at Louisiana Tech and earned a Doctor of Education in STEM curriculum and instruction in 2023 from the American College of Education.

She is an international presenter, author, trainer and researcher at EdInnovation focused on empowering tomorrow's STEM workforce through literacy.

Birdon is currently high school curriculum coordinator for Ouachita Parish Schools and has also served as TAP master teacher/school turnaround specialist and district science teacher leader for that district.

She is a founding member of LearnShare Leader, which connects educators to harness the power of learning with STEM and has served as science teacher leader advisor for the Louisiana Department of Education.

Tammy Neil (1992) has joined the Wilmington, North Carolina, office of Cranfill Sumner LLP as Of Counsel, where



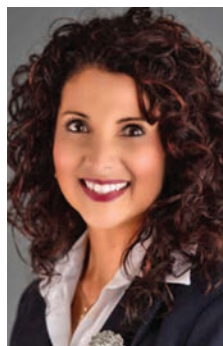
Neil

her practice focuses on civil litigation. Neil is a litigation attorney with a wide range of civil litigation experience, including defending carriers in insurance-coverage

and bad-faith litigation, defending employment matters, commercial matters, appeals and product-liability disputes. She previously practiced law in Dallas for more than 20 years and is licensed to practice law in North Carolina, Texas and Louisiana.

Neil earned her law degree from Louisiana State University and a Bachelor of Arts from the Louisiana Scholars' College at NSU.

Dr. Wendi Palermo, Chief Education and Training Officer with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, was inducted into the Nursing Foundation Hall of Fame at the Louisiana Nurses Foundation Nightingale Awards ceremony in September. The Louisiana Nurses Foundation Nightingale Awards celebrate excellence in nursing across 18 award categories, including LSNA Hall of Fame. Palermo was selected from among 167 nominees.



Palermo

pivotal role in shaping nursing education programs and ensuring that students receive the highest quality education and training. Her visionary leadership and dedication to the nursing community have been instrumental in preparing the next generation of nurses to provide exceptional care to patients across Louisiana.

Steve Graf (1984) of Natchitoches, a two-sport athlete at NSU who played football and baseball, was named to the



Graf

Mount Pleasant (Texas) High School Athletic Hall of Fame this past October. Graf graduated from Mount Pleasant High in 1979, a standout athlete in football, baseball and track, and was recipient

of the 1978 W.L. Means Outstanding Offensive Back award, the Edward Milam Award for Outstanding Football Player and was one of the tri-captains for the 1978 football team. He was a two-time 1st Team All-District punter, a 3-time All-District third baseman/pitcher and the district runner-up in the long jump. In addition to athletics, Graf was named All-School Boy by the faculty in 1979, was president of the VICA Club and a member of the Key Club.

At NSU, Graf was a three-year starter in football at safety and a four-year starter in baseball, earning All-Conference in baseball. Graf was voted into the Northwestern State Hall of Fame in 2009 for both football and baseball. He is

the only athlete in NSU history to sign pro contracts in two separate sports. He earned a B.S. degree in Industrial Education Technology Engineering.

Graf was drafted by the Montreal Expos in 1983 as an outfielder and signed with the Houston Gamblers of the USFL as a free safety after his baseball career.

Graf has been married to Sherrie Evans Graf (1983) for 42 years and they have three children, Brittany (2008), Meredith (2012) and Brandon. He retired from Holloway Sportswear as the Louisiana director of manufacturing in 2004. Now self-employed, he is the owner of the Hook'N Up & Track'N Down Outdoor Radio Show, co-host of an internet show called Tackle Talk Live and an outdoor column journalist for the Natchitoches Parish Journal.

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McGee

Terrence McGee was one of three inducted into the Athens (Texas) ISD Athletic Hall of Fame during ceremonies Dec. 7.

McGee was a four-year starting cornerback for the Demons. In 2000, he set an NCAA record by averaging 23.7 yards per punt return. He was inducted into the N-Club Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2020. He remains Northwestern State's career leader in pass breakups (44) and career punt return average (17.6) while sitting in a ninth-place tie for most career interceptions (11). He was a fourth-round draft pick by the Buffalo Bills in 2003, making a Pro Bowl appearance the following year. McGee spent his 10-year NFL career with the Bills.

Outstanding alumni, supporters recognized during 2023 Homecoming celebration

Northwestern State University recognized inductees into the Long Purple Line, the university's alumni hall of distinction, during a luncheon and program Nov. 3 and presented awards to three alumni for volunteer and service efforts to the university.

2023 Long Purple Line inductees were the late Johnny Antoon, Sen. Louie Bernard and Judge Van Kyzar of Natchitoches and Gail Sweeney Stephenson of Baton Rouge.

Inclusion in the Long Purple Line is the highest honor the university bestows upon a graduate. The Long Purple Line was established in 1990 to provide recognition and appreciation to individuals whose career accomplishments or service to their fellow man have enhanced the reputation and prestige of Northwestern State. Selection may be based upon past or continuing achievements in individuals' careers, exemplary and extraordinary service to community, state and nation or both career accomplishments and service to mankind including service to their alma mater.

Dr. Katrina O'Con of Natchitoches received the Outstanding Alumna Distinguished Service Award, presented to an NSU graduate who has exhibited dedication and loyalty to Northwestern's programs and mission. Award winners demonstrate a record of distinguished service to NSU and continued interest in serving the university as a volunteer, donor or advocate.

Dr. Nikki Ceasar-Small of Arlington, Texas, was recipient of the NSU Alumni Association's Volunteer of the Year Award, presented to a member of the Alumni Association who serves the university as a volunteer, donor or advocate. The individual must also have an exemplary record of volunteering time, talents and service to NSU and be active with a chapter, affiliate program or other form of volunteer service to NSU.

Amy Lee of Natchitoches was presented with the Outstanding Young Alumna Award, presented to a graduate

age 40 or younger who graduated within the last 10 years. The individual is selected based on dedication and loyalty to Northwestern's programs and continued interest in serving the

LONG PURPLE LINE

HALL OF DISTINCTION

university in his/her life as a volunteer, donor and /or advocate.

The awards were presented as part of NSU Homecoming festivities taking place Nov. 3-4.



NSU inducted the late Johnny Antoon, Sen. Louie Bernard, Judge Van Kyzar and Gail Stephenson into the Long Purple Line, the university's alumni hall of distinction, during a program and luncheon Nov. 3. From left are NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones, Michael Antoon, Kyzar, Stephenson, Bernard, Merle Antoon, Danielle Antoon Cobb and Daniel Cobb.



Outstanding alumni were honored during Northwestern State University's Long Purple Line program Nov. 3. From left are Dr. Katrina O'Con, Outstanding Alumna Distinguished Service Award winner; Dr. Nikki Ceasar-Small, the NSU Alumni Association's Volunteer of the Year Award winner, and Amy Lee, Outstanding Young Alumna Award.

Class of 2023 Hall of Distinguished Educators inducted



Northwestern State University's Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development honored 2023 inductees into the Hall of Distinguished Educators, along with other honorees. From left are Dr. Neeru Deep, interim dean of the College; Dr. Vickie Gentry, who was named a Friend to Education; Hall of Distinguished Educators Ben LaGrone, Phillip McClung, Carolyn Burroughs, Janna Maggio and Janice Moreau and Dr. Katrina Jordan, director of NSU's School of Education. Brittany Bonnaffons was also recognized as this year's Outstanding Young Educator and unable to attend.



The Dear School of
CREATIVE & PERFORMING ARTS



CAPA Hall of Fame

Northwestern State University's Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts honored long-time faculty members Richard Rose and Tony Smith as this year's inductees into the CAPA Hall of Fame. The two were recognized during Homecoming festivities Nov. 4. From left are Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Greg Handel, Scott Burrell, director of the School of Creative and Performing Arts; Rose, Smith and NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones.

ASH band establishes Dr. Jerry Payne Memorial Scholarship

The Alexandria Senior High School Band of 1972 established a scholarship at Northwestern State University to honor the memory of a beloved and influential band director who touched the lives of many students over several decades.

The Dr. Jerry Payne Endowed Scholarship is a four-year scholarship that will be awarded to a student from freshman year through graduation as long as all requirements are met.

Payne was born in Dodson in 1935. After graduating from Bolton High School, he earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at NSU and became a music educator and performer. As an undergraduate, Payne paid for his college expenses by playing saxophone in NSU's big band ensemble, The Demonnaires.

Payne began his career at Alexandria Junior High and then Alexandria Senior High before returning to his alma mater to serve as director of bands at Northwestern. During this time, he also served his country in the U.S. Army National Guard and was called to active duty during the Berlin Crisis of 1961.

After over 20 years molding and mentoring young musicians in Louisiana,

Payne accepted the band director position in Marshall, Texas, in 1977. Under Payne's direction and with a growing, dedicated staff of music educators joining the team, the Marshall "Big Red Pride" Band began to grow and improve throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.

Payne led the Big Red Pride for over 25 years before announcing his retirement in May 2002.

Payne was a member of the Louisiana Music Educators Hall of Fame and the Texas Music Educators Hall of Fame and was inducted into Northwestern State University Creative and Performing Arts Hall of Fame.

Payne devoted his later years to caring for his wife, Marilyn, as she battled the effects of Parkinson's disease. She passed away in 2014 and Payne moved to Hallsville to be closer to his daughters and grandchildren. He continued to play and listen to his music and spend time and holidays with his children, grandchildren and friends. He lived with his son Mal and daughter-in-law



Dr. Payne was inducted into NSU's School of Creative and Performing Arts Hall of Fame in 2016. The award was presented by Dr. Karl Carpenter and Dr. Greg Handel.

Regina, who were his principal caregivers, until he passed away July 17, 2023.

Friends and former students who wish to contribute to the Payne scholarship can do so by visiting <http://northwesternstatealumni.com/payne-scholarship>.

Cane River Golden Sisters support female graduate students



Martha Hopewell of Alexandria is the 2023 recipient of the Cane River Golden Sisters Scholarship, presented by the Natchitoches philanthropic organization to a female graduate student at Northwestern State University. Hopewell earned an undergraduate degree in early childhood education at NSU and is pursuing a master's degree in the School of Education. Pictured are, seated from left, Brenda Melder, Hopewell, Sue Hortman and Rosie Finical. On the middle row are Ethelyn Millar, Peggy Williams, Patricia Todd, Tamela Aldredge, Charlotte Cross, Arlene Mayeux and Becky Green. On the back row are Rena Baudoin, Kathy Guin, Lisa Davis, Nancy Rutledge, Janice Paul, Pat Pierson and Gayle Hines.

The NSU Foundation would like to announce the following newly established scholarships.

Jeff West Scholarship

Moulton Family International Student Relief Fund

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/moulton-international-fund/>

Eric Thomas Englehart Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/engelhardt-scholarship/>

Lewis C. Hines Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/hines-scholarship/>

Cade & Kimberly Roberson Endowment Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/roberson-scholarship/>

Mark Thompson Family Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/thompson-scholarship/>

The NSU School of Education "Call Me Mister" Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/call-me-mister/>

Thornton Family Scholarship

Dr. Jerry Allen Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/allen-scholarship/>

Alicia Renee Davis Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/alicia-davis-scholarship/>

After decades of leadership in higher ed, Muse gives back to NSU

The NSU Foundation announces a new endowed scholarship that honors a distinguished graduate, Dr. William “Billy” Muse of Cincinnati, Ohio, an alumnus of the university who was president of the University of Akron from 1984-1992, Auburn University from 1992-2001 and chancellor of East Carolina University from 2001-2003.

The Dr. William “Billy” Muse Scholarship will be presented to an undergraduate majoring in business. The student must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or better.

“The ideal recipient would be a student who has an excellent academic record—GPA and test scores—and who comes from a low-income family,” Muse said, adding that his involvement on campus opened many doors for him. His way of giving back is in providing opportunities for bright students from low-income backgrounds the means to earn an education.

Muse earned a degree in accounting at Northwestern State in 1960, followed by an MBA and Ph.D. in business and administration from the University of Arkansas. He taught at Georgia Tech and Ohio University and served as dean of the business schools at Appalachian State, the University of Nebraska and Texas A & M, where he was also vice chancellor. After Texas A & M, he served terms as president at Akron, Auburn and East Carolina. In 2007, he worked with Michigan State University on a Kettering Foundation Fellowship.

When Muse graduated from Delhi High School, his teachers helped him apply for a T. H. Harris Scholarship to attend NSU, where he played baseball for two years, was business manager and later sports editor for the Current Sauce, served as president of the Association of Men Students and joined Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity. As a senior, he was vice president of the student council and a member of Blue Key.

“My years at Northwestern were definitely formative in preparing me for a career that was very meaningful to me and allowed me to have some important leadership positions,” Muse said. “I would never have been able to accomplish that if not for the excellent education and leadership development that I had at Northwestern.

Friends who wish to contribute to the scholarship can do so at <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/muse-scholarship/>.



Dr. William Muse

Psychology students will benefit from Thornton Family Scholarship

A Natchitoches family is supporting the Department of Psychology at Northwestern State University by creating a scholarship to benefit undergraduates pursuing a degree in psychology and/or addiction studies.

David and Jennifer Thornton created the Thornton Family Department of Psychology Scholarship with a donation of \$25,000 to the NSU Foundation to be awarded in the amount of \$12,500 for both the spring and fall semesters. The Thorntons worked with Shannon Wall-Hale, an instructor of psychology, to coordinate the scholarship and its criteria. Recipients must maintain a 3.0 or better grade point average.

“This is about helping as many students as we can,” Dr. Jennifer Thornton said. “We hope to help students defray expenses.”

The Thorntons have a strong relationship with NSU and have created scholarships to support students in Computer Information Systems, Nursing, Business, Fine Arts, Accounting and Criminal Justice over the last 10 years.

NSU’s Department of Psychology is part of the Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development. There about 400



David and Dr. Jennifer Thornton of Natchitoches established the Thornton Family Department of Psychology Scholarship. From left are Dr. Neeru Deep, interim dean of the Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development; the Thorntons and Shannon Wall-Hale, instructor of psychology.

students in the Department, which is the second largest in the College and the fifth largest on campus

Interim Dean Dr. Neeru Deep said she is grateful for the Thorntons’ support, which will help hardworking students.

David Thornton earned a degree in

Computer Information Systems at NSU in 2007. Jennifer Thornton earned an associate degree in Nursing in 2010, a bachelor’s degree in nursing in 2013 and a Doctor of Nursing Practice in 2022.

Students can apply for the scholarship at <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/>.



NSU administrators, dignitaries and honored guests shoveled dirt symbolizing the start of construction on the David and Sherry Morgan Health Performance Center on Dec. 1. From left are Jen Kelly, Gabe Firment, Lisa Frontaura, Kirk Soileau, Lola Dunahoe, Louie Bernard, David Morgan, Sherri Morgan, Marcus Jones, Kevin Bostian, Alan Seabaugh, Chris Maggio, Bailey Willis, Mike Newton and Dale Wohletz.

Morgan Health Performance Center a 'milestone' for NSU Athletics

The first day of December brought what, in some ways, may stand as the first day in a new era of Northwestern State athletics.

On an unseasonably warm Friday on the Northwestern State football practice field, 15 dignitaries turned over a pile of dirt, symbolizing the groundbreaking for the multi-million dollar David and Sherry Morgan Health Performance Center.

The annex that will be located in the Donald G. Kelly Athletic Complex will include a new 11,600 square foot weight room with space for more than 100 student-athletes, a 25-foot artificial turf pad, a new nutrition center, a student-athlete lounge and offices for the strength and conditioning staff. A second phase of the construction project will convert the current weight room into a high-tech rehabilitation center along with other sports medicine upgrades. The third phase will be the renovation of the current Eugene Christmas athletic training room.

The roughly hour-long ceremony brought to life a project that worked its way through the legislative and fund raising process, much like a football team making its way steadily downfield rather than by virtue of one or two big plays.

"It's like (State Senator) Louie Bernard said during the program, 'Sometimes good things take a little bit longer than you think to come to fruition,'" former Director of Athletics Greg Burke said. "This project started before COVID. That meeting with David Morgan in (former NSU President) Dr. (Chris) Maggio's office was Homecoming of 2019. Then COVID really put the brakes on things for over a year. We got it going

again. Thanks to a lot of people from the donors to the legislators to the people on campus, I knew it was going to happen. From the first time (current NSU Director of Athletics) Kevin (Bostian) and I talked, it was a discussion point. There was no doubt it was going to get to the finish line. It was a matter of timing more than anything else."

The timing of Friday's ceremony came two days after Northwestern State introduced its new football coach, Blaine McCorkle, who attended the ceremony.

During his introductory news conference, McCorkle spoke of meeting with Bostian and how Bostian had a "vision for everything" within the walls of the NSU fieldhouse. The groundbreaking brought some of those closer to reality.

"There are a lot of times you got into a new place and they tell you what they're going to do," McCorkle said. "There's nothing better when you show up on the first day and they're putting shovels in the ground. That's pretty exciting to see, and it gives me hope and encouragement that I made the right choice coming here. It's not just a vision and a reality, and we saw that today."

Added Northwestern State President Dr. Marcus Jones: "The renovation and expansion of the athletic complex is a major milestone for NSU Athletics. Not only is it a symbol of progress and pride, but it is also an investment in our coaches, staff, student-athletes and future Demons. For NSU to remain competitive, we must continue to recruit the highest-caliber of student-athlete. Modern recruiting standards are based on the expectations of prospective student-athletes, and the

quality of facilities is a major factor in the decision-making process of every student-athlete. Being able to showcase a state-of-the-art facility, such as the one that will be built here, will give NSU an advantage over our peers and help us to attract a high-caliber recruit."

A significant portion of what lies ahead for NSU Athletics as it relates to the center is rooted in what happened on the campus more than half a century ago. David Morgan walked into a business class – "Late," Sherry Morgan added – and met his wife.

"I saw this beautiful, blonde-headed young lady with a Tri Sigma jersey on. I said, 'Hey, I haven't seen her before. I'm going to go sit by her.' That began a 50-year relationship and marriage. We just celebrated 50 years of marriage – to the same person, which I think is important."

When the Morgans announced their \$1.5 million lead gift in April 2022, David Morgan called attending Northwestern State a "game-changer" for both he and his wife.

The same could be said for what the Morgans' donation did to move the project forward.

"The support this project – and Northwestern State University as a whole – received from David and Sherry Morgan cannot be understated nor can it be under appreciated," Bostian said. "The David and Sherry Morgan Health Performance Center will benefit current and future student-athletes in much the same way David's and Sherry's experiences as Northwestern State benefited them. The work put in by our university administration and our

NSU names athletic facilities Donald G. Kelly Athletic Complex

Northwestern State University unveiled signage designating the school's athletic fieldhouse and surrounding facilities as the Donald G. Kelly Athletic Complex during the Sept. 30 football game. Kelly and family were recognized, along with his contributions to NSU while serving in state government for more than two decades.

A prominent alumnus and student-athlete, Kelly served as a delegate to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention in 1973 and was elected to five consecutive terms in the Senate from 1976-1996 representing Natchitoches, Winn, Sabine and Red River parishes. He was a floor leader for Governors Edwin Edwards and Buddy Roemer and served on powerful Budget and Finance committees.

Kelly was the driving force behind obtaining funding for construction of NSU Athletic Fieldhouse and the major expansion of Turpin Stadium, which gave NSU one of the most advanced athletic facilities for a university of its size at the time. NSU recently replaced and upgraded chairback seating and completed other



Former state senator Don Kelly was joined by family when honored at NSU Sept. 30. From left are Brandon Kelly, Callie Kelly holding Blaze Kelly, NSU Athletic Director Kevin Bostian, NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones, Keenan Kelly, Jennifer Kelly, Pat Kelly, Don Kelly, Anderson Kelly, Shelby Bedgood, Kaitlynn Bedgood, Melanie Bedgood, Hunter Bedgood holding Wyatt Bedgood and Ariel Rachal. On the back row are Mike Adkins holding Rhett Bedgood and Hunter Adkins.

Turpin Stadium improvements.

A former football player, Kelly is a member of the university's N Club Hall of Fame and has been inducted into the Long

Purple Line, the alumni hall of distinction, the highest honor of an alumnus of NSU. He is also a member of the Political Hall of Fame in Winnfield.



2023 N-Club Hall of Fame

Nine student-athletes and one remarkable team were honored Nov. 4 at the 2023 N-Club Hall of Fame induction ceremony. On the front row from left are Rebecca Willis, mother of Ahmad Willis; Andre Carron, Brandon Morgan, Erin Hebert, Chad Moon (2000-01 athletic trainer), Elaine Clark (2000-01 administrative assistant), Ryan Duplessis and B.J. Netterville. On the second row are Jacqueline Canton Barnes, Britiany Cargill Baker, Annie Johnston, Forrest White (2000-01 manager), Josh Hancock, Coach Mike McConathy, Alann Polk and Angela Davidson Weathers. On the backrow are Chris Thompson, Dr. William Broussard, Michael Edwards and Kenton Fisher.

Morgan Center continued

legislative representatives at the local and statewide levels is symbolically recognized here today, but the impact it will have will be seen physically on the fields or on the courts where our student-athletes will compete."

That impact will be felt outside the walls of the university as well.

"We believe the strength of the university is the strength of our medical center," said Natchitoches Regional Medical Center Chief Executive Officer

Kirk Soileau. "As the community grows, we grow as an organization. On behalf of Natchitoches Regional Medical Center, our associates, our medical staff and our board, congratulations on this amazing project. Thank you to the Morgans for putting this together and helping this all come together."

Bernard echoed the Morgans' sentiments in his remarks.

"There is something about the college experience," he said. "There is something about going to a university and what it

leaves with you. It drips with nostalgia when you come back to your university and you can be proud of it. We're always going to be proud of Northwestern. There's not a university, a business, an industry in America that hasn't had tough times. Tough times don't last. Tough people do. All of these things you see happening today are positive things for Northwestern, and I challenge all of you to stay strong, stay positive. Be more than involved with Northwestern – be committed to Northwestern."



Coach Blaine McCorkle's family joined him as he was introduced to the NSU community. From left are parents Diane and Sam McCorkle, Coach McCorkle, his wife Gina and daughter Gracie. Children Emma, Audrey and Sammy were not present.

New head Football Coach McCorkle 'in his comfort zone'

Five. Six. Forty-seven. Two hundred eighty-three.

There were a lot of numbers floating around the Stroud Room inside the Donald G. Kelly Athletic Complex as Blaine McCorkle spoke Nov. 29. The largest one stood out for a couple of reasons – one being McCorkle always aims to clear out his number of unread text messages daily.

"I got a lot of responses, some from you who are in this room," McCorkle said. "My phone number started spreading around quickly. Last night, before I went to bed, I was trying to sift through as many text messages as I could. Before I turned it off, I was at 283 messages. If I haven't gotten to you, bear with me, it's coming. The response I got from the Natchitoches community meant a lot and told me how special this place is and how much you want something to be different."

McCorkle's reference to his unread and unreturned messages drew its share of laughs, but the other numbers he spoke of are the ones he plans to make tenets of his time as Northwestern State's 16th head football coach.

Upon meeting with Northwestern State's current players the previous day, McCorkle laid out the expectations of his culture to his new charges.

"When we originally built our program, we had our four pillars of success – character, trust, unity and accountability – and we added a fifth one to it, which was toughness," McCorkle said. "The five stars of our five-star culture: character, trust, unity, accountability and toughness. We're going to teach these kids to be tough. The thing you have to understand about toughness is it's not always what the

world thinks toughness is. Sometimes people think toughness is a big, bad bully walking around. No, no, no.

"Sometimes toughness is the guy in a white-collar shirt who gets up every morning, puts his feet on the floor and goes to work, sits behind a desk and makes good decisions to take care of his wife and his kids and his family. That's tough. That's real grown-man toughness. That's the type of toughness we're going to focus on, because those things carry over in the classroom and the community. If we're hammering on those things, they'll carry over right there on the field."

That toughness and culture helped McCorkle lift a Belhaven team that had not won more than three games in a season since 2013 to a combined 24-7 record in his final three seasons as the Blazers' head coach.

Belhaven finished the 2023 season 9-1 and captured the program's first outright conference title and made its initial appearance in the NCAA Division III playoffs. McCorkle said his final duty at Belhaven was ordering conference championship rings for a team that featured 21 seniors – all of whom already had earned their undergraduate degrees.

That on- and off-field success not only lent credence to McCorkle's culture but also highlighted his overall strengths as a coach.

"I'm 47 years old, and I tell people I've been in college football for 47 years," McCorkle said. "It's who I am. I'm a football coach."

He is a football coach with a list of six bullet-point goals – not all that are always defined in the statistical realm.

"These will not change from today until the day I leave here in about 20 years when I retire like Sam Goodwin here," McCorkle said. "The first one is every man who enters our program leaves it better than when he came. It's easy to have all these football-specific goals like we want to be 42 percent on third down or this in the red zone. Program goals are much bigger than that."

"The second is we want to lead the Southland Conference in GPA and APR on a yearly basis. We all watch the SEC on Saturdays, and we see the patches that underneath them you see the banner that says 'Graduate.' If those guys at that level – that's the best to do it in college football – if they're graduating players, maybe there's something to that. That's a message we need to follow. If guys are invested in their school and doing well, it's harder for them to leave. The third one is we want to be in position yearly to win a conference championship. Fourth, we want to be a sustained program of national prominence. Any time something comes up – playoffs, postseason, rankings – Northwestern State needs to be in that conversation. I started that sentence with the word sustain, not flash in the pan. The fifth is to win and advance in the postseason. The last goal in that group is to win a national championship. If you do all the things before that, that puts you in position to play for and win a national championship. I'm not scared to say that here at Northwestern State, and I'm currently the coach that owns an 0-6 football team. That's on me. I own that, and I'm going to do everything I can to fix that. You have my word."

McCorkle's speech was the culmination of a 26-year coaching journey that began following his four-year playing career at LSU when the former long snapper served as a student assistant with the Tigers. The winding road that took him to six different FCS schools – Tennessee-Martin, Liberty, Chattanooga, Tennessee Tech, Richmond and Delaware – led him to finding what he called his comfort zone.



To watch Coach Blaine McCorkle's Nov. 29 press conference visit: <https://nsu.la/ui3>



New Northwestern State head football coach Blaine McCorkle, left, and Director of Athletics Kevin Bostian held a jersey signifying McCorkle as NSU's 16th head football coach.

That feeling was reinforced during his tour of the Northwestern State campus.

"Personally, this has been a 26-year-long dream to come back to the state of Louisiana, which I love dearly, and to be a Division I head coach," McCorkle said. "A lot of what attracted me to Northwestern State is FCS is my comfort zone. This is where I feel I fit the best, where I have the most time invested. I love this level of football. I think it still has purity to it while playing at an extremely high level. We still live in the portal world. We live in a world of NIL. That's real. A lot of players at this level are playing for the right reasons – with a good chip on their shoulder and something to prove."

"I'm excited to be back at this level. Walking around the campus, I just felt comfortable."



New head football coach Blaine McCorkle took questions from the media during his introductory press conference Nov. 29.

The McCorkle File

Age: 47

Hometown: Pensacola, Florida

Education: B.S. Education, LSU, 2000

Wife: Gina

Children: Daughters Gracie, Emma, Audrey and son Sammy

Coaching Timeline

2018-23: Head coach, Belhaven University

2017: Offensive Line Coach, Delaware

2012-16: Offensive line coach, Richmond

2009-11: Offensive line coach, Liberty

2008: Offensive line coach, Tennessee Tech

2007: Offensive line assistant/strength coach, Liberty

2006: Offensive line coach/tight ends coach, Chattanooga

2005: Offensive line coach, Liberty

2003-04: Offensive line coach, Sewanee

2000-02: WR/OL/TE coach, Tennessee Martin

1999: Student Assistant, LSU

In Memory

1949 – Lloyd A. Ponder, Nov. 15, 2023, Natchitoches	1968 – Maj. (R) Leonard “Ted” Fowler, Dec. 2, 2023, Natchitoches	2007 – William K. Hymes, Nov. 11, 2023, Natchitoches
1950 – Homer F. “Sonny” Greer Jr., Nov. 19, 2023, Magnolia, Arkansas	1969 – Mary Carolyn Brown Fruge, Feb. 17, 2023, Haslet, Texas	2022 – Alicia Davis, Sept. 21, 2023, Natchitoches
1951 – Katherine Nell Rogers Ware, Sept. 26, 2023, Baton Rouge	1969 – Wilbur Edsel McKee, Sept. 12, 2023, Bossier City	John Randall “Randy” Lee, Jan. 7, 2023, Baton Rouge
1954 – Bobby Madison Earnest, Oct. 13, 2023, Daleville, Virginia	1970 – Connie Hanson, May 31, 2023, Tecumseh, Kansas	Lydia Scott Lee, Jan. 11, 2023, Baton Rouge
1955 – Wilbert Mason, Feb. 27, 2023, Shreveport	1972 – John C. Wang, Oct. 18, 2023, Winter Garden, Florida	James Michael “Mike” Demaree, Sept. 28, 2023, Heflin
1957 – Lollie Yvonne Hicks, Nov. 28, 2023, Natchitoches	1972 – Gary E. Stephens, Dec. 2, 2023, Shreveport	Ronnie Caldwell Jr., Oct. 12, 2023, Austin, Texas
1961 – Rev. Carl Smith, Aug. 24, 2023, Center, Texas	1973 – Joan Cummings Reeves, December 4, 2023, Quitman	Marjorie Ann Myrick Earnest, July 18, 2020, Daleville, Virginia
1962 – Scriven A. Taylor Sr., Oct. 16, 2023, Natchitoches	1975 – Joseph G. “Rod” Maricelli, Oct. 19, 2023, Shreveport	Dr. Martin Rudd, Oct. 14, 2023, New London, Wisconsin Dr. Rudd was assistant professor of chemistry at NSU from 1997-2002.
1965 – Ronald D. Canarday, Oct. 13, 2023, Calvin	1983 – Dennis Hubbard, Nov. 21, 2023, Many	Dr. Dennis J. Oneal, Nov. 12, 2023, Murfreesboro, Tennessee Dr. Oneal was head of the Department of Journalism from 1980-83.
1966 – Richard Crain, June 6, 2023, Colfax	1998 – Anne Lace Stevens, Oct. 21, 2023, Natchitoches	
1966 – Alvin Charles “Al” Moreau Jr., Sept. 29, 2023, Zachary	2003 – Shanda Florane, Oct. 23, 2023, Coushatta	
1968 – Thomas “Tommy” Clayton Champlin, Oct. 20, 2023, Jonesville	2003 – Theodore Fountaine III, Nov. 13, 2023, Alexandria	

If you would like to make a contribution to the NSU Foundation in memory of a deceased alumnus, call (318) 357-4292 or email Cristy Bernard, assistant director of Donor Relations, at bernardc@nsula.edu.



Save the Date

Friday, March 15, 2024

NSU Foundation Premier Fund Raiser

Hosted by the NSU Foundation and the Louisiana Seafood Board. All proceeds go to support the NSU faculty, staff, programs, and scholarships.

For information go to nsu.la/FlavorOfLA

Guess Who



The NSU 2004 Potpourri pictures officers from Blue Key Honor Society, which bases eligibility for membership on scholarship, leadership, integrity and service. ***Can you name them?*** Send your answers to jacksonl@nsula.edu and include the year you graduated and city of residence.

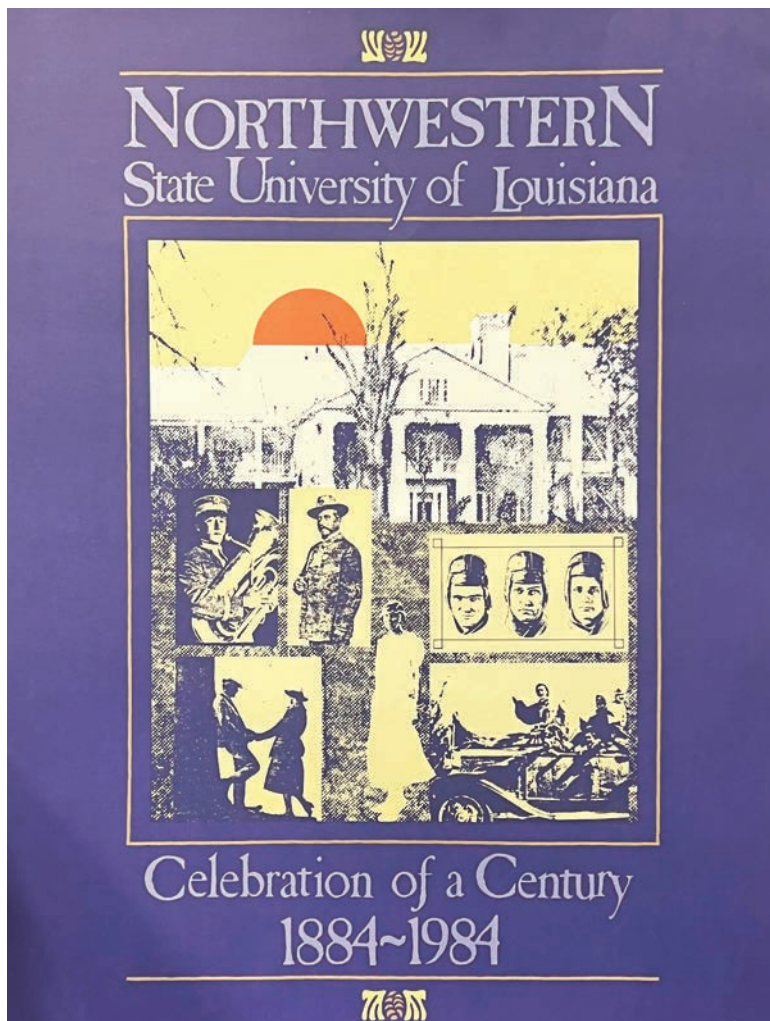
Answer to the Fall 2023 Guess Who:

#26 Kenneth DeWitt was the Demon pictured playing the team's quarterfinal game against Idaho. DeWitt was a running back from Mansfield High School. That year he ran the ball for just over 300 yards and five touchdowns.

Those who emailed in their guesses are as follows.

Elizabeth Lyle Lorber (1986), Sugarland, Texas
Kristie White (2013, 2020), DeSoto, Texas
Matt Endris (1997), Fairview-Alpha
Annie Bloxsom (1990), Pensacola, Florida
William "Billy" Myers (1960), Maurice
Wyvetta Wade Parker (1988), Port Allen. Parker writes, "My husband Leonard Parker Jr. ('89) was a Linebacker (#40) on the '88 football team."
Karen Guidry Guidroz (1989), Larose
Henry Adley (1969), Foster City, California
Kimberly Lewis (1988), Houston

Looking Back



Northwestern State hosted a banquet in January 1984 to launch a year-long Centennial Celebration. It was the first of many events scheduled throughout 1984 to commemorate the university's 100's anniversary.

The three eras of NSU's 100-year history were recognized, the Normal years from 1884-1944, the College years from 1944-1970 and the University years from 1970-1984.

That year also highlighted the debut of the Westminster Chimes, a chimes system purchased by NSU students as a Centennial gift to the university.

The University created a commemorative Centennial poster, left, which continues to be valued by collectors.



Northwestern State University

Alumni Columns

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Danielle Cobb, Director of Alumni Affairs
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